

I am writing this letter to express my dissatisfaction with a decision by the U.S. Department of Education by to declare almost 200 television shows inappropriate for captioning by the Department's Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program, effective October 1, 2003.

According to the National Association for the Deaf required federal rulemaking processes were completely disregarded, thus the public was not provided with the opportunity to provide written opinions, data, or arguments on the recently narrowed definition of "educational, news, or informational" programs for captioning. Nancy J. Bloch, NAD Executive Director, said, "This secretive process amounts to censorship, which runs counter to the principles of the First Amendment freedom of speech. This action also segregates over 28 million deaf and hard of hearing individuals from access to the same shows as everyone else in America." In addition, Bloch added, families of persons with a hearing loss (parents, siblings, and grandparents in particular) bring the number of persons adversely impacted to many millions more.

The censored shows include reruns of family favorites such as "Bewitched" and modern shows such as "Law & Order." "Disney Monthly Original Children's Movies" and "Pokemon" cartoons, fixtures in today's youth culture, are also being censored. Virtually all sports programming has been censored, isolating deaf and hard of hearing persons of all ages, not only in the classroom, but within the family, at the school lunch table, and on the playground. The censorship of these shows not only prevents deaf and hard of hearing children from watching shows that help them learn about the trends, culture, and society around them, censorship also prevents deaf and hard of hearing parents from making informed decisions on appropriate programming for their children.

I am deaf and am quite upset over the prospect of government determining what shows I am able to watch. That is discriminatory. I enjoyed all videos and TV programs but can only watch programs that are closed-captioned. At a time when you should be expanding access to persons with disability this action is very upsetting. I hope you will act to overturn this decision.

Sincerely,

Isaac Schaeffer